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A Veil of Snow

● **Thomas J. McCauley**

HANGING from the porch roof, an empty swing weaved like a tired sentry, and on the lawn below, wilted grass lay beneath a thin veil of snow. Dolores sat rigidly and uncomfortably on the steps leading from the porch. The air was brisk, and she would have rather been in her room — her warm, pleasing room. She looked down the single street of Beckley. There were no streetlights, but, here and there, a few houselights flickered dimly. Even these, as the minute hand reached for eleven, were vanishing, like dying vigil lights, one by one. Soon, there would be no light at all.

A short boy with a burr haircut and well-formed square features sat on the step below her. He nodded towards the swing. "Let's go up there, Dolly. It's too cold down here."

"No!" Her tone was sharp, definite. "No, Ernie! I've told you before about that swing!" A slight breeze rustled through the porch. The swing's rusted chains creaked. Dolores felt a chill, but, making a muff of the sleeves in her grey sweater, she said nothing.

A shrill laugh cracked through the silent town — then another. Echoing through the darkness, the laughter assumed an odd vibration like thought distilled in time breaking loose. But fanciful reveries can be wasteful in such a small town, where, sometimes, an incidental noise can be enough for recognition, and, although no one could be seen, Dolores knew the laughter to be that of the teenage couple from the other end of town. Nevertheless, she closed her eyes, permitting herself the illusion that the voices which could now be heard in muffled whispers were actually far off and ethereal. Swaying back and forth dreamily, she clung for a moment to what had been a pleasant memory. She pressed her eyes shut tighter, but the vision was unsatisfactory.

"Hey!" Ernie nudged her with his elbow, and the memory vanished. "You're drifting off again."

"Huh?" She looked at him, as if he were not there. "Oh! I . . . I was just thinking."

"Penny for your thoughts." Ernie smiled that sickening smile that had annoyed, embarrassed her all evening. She frowned. She had expected him to say something like that and then smile. She had expected almost those very words. She wondered why she had allowed her brother to talk her into going out on a date with Ernie. He wasn't at all like Harry.

"If you really want to know, I was thinking of Harry. How we used to walk along that street at night just like those two kids out there."

"That's Tony Vlatnik's kid brother, isn't it?"

"No! I mean Harry Critelli!"

"I know that. I mean the kid out there."

Dolores looked out towards the

street, but her eyes fell short on the picket fence bordering the lawn. It needed painting badly, and for many years, the gate had been off the hinges. Her father in his usual drunken temper had kicked it off, and no one had ever repaired it. She shifted nervously on the step and turned back to Ernie. "You change the subject every time I talk about Harry."

"I do? I . . ." He shrugged his shoulders, as if registering helplessness. "I don't mean to."

"Every time! Like when I told you what Mrs. Lazor said in the store today. You let on you didn't even hear me."

"What did you want me to say?"

"Well, you can't blame me for . . . for talking about him sometimes, can you?"

"Of course not!" Ernie paused, seemingly searching for words. Dolores sensed his embarrassment and waited. He bent forward, squinting. "There! See?" He motioned vaguely towards the street. "I told you that was Joey Vlatnik."

Dolores could see only two indistinct outlines out beyond the gate. In the uncertainty of night it was as if the years had rolled back and the couple on the street were Harry and she, walking arm-in-arm as they had so often done, despite the neighbors. But it didn't last. The teenage couple appeared from, and withdrew into, the darkness in a few seconds, and it was as if it had never been. Dolores became sullen. She glared at Ernie. "You did it again."

"Did what?"

"Avoided speaking of Harry!"

"Oh, let's talk about something else, Dolly. How about the movie? Did you like it?"

"It was all right. I didn't like the girl. She should've stayed."

"But he was a first class bum."

"She shouldn't have listened to them!" She realized she was shouting and lowered her voice. "People always talk."

"Nobody said anything, Dolly. She knew - - "

"Oh, let's drop it, then!" Her hands were tense and she clasped them together. Down the street another light went out. She stared at where the light had been, then twisted away abruptly. "What was the leading man's name, Ernie?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"He looked something like Harry. You knew Harry, didn't you?"

"Just to see. He was older."

Overhead, a plane, its signal lights blinking on and off, appeared, disappeared, reappeared, and disappeared again in the moonless, cloud-spotted sky. Dolores watched the red and green lights, until they faded, then listened to the plane's motor which became dimmer and dimmer until, finally, it could no longer be heard. She took a deep breath. "You know, Ernie, it's because of what happened that I . . . hesitated to go out with you. You understand, don't you?"

"But it's been over four years."

"I think he would have done the same. He - - ," Dolores looked up, startled by a sudden laugh that resounded loudly from somewhere down the street. Disguised by night, the laugh had an eerie quality, and she could hardly recognize Joey Vlatnik's voice. "He would have done the same, Ernie."

"Maybe you're right. Maybe he would have done what you did, but I doubt it. Even your own brother said he wasn't half good enough for

you. Harry was - - "

"Don't you dare say anything about Harry." Her whole body froze; then, her taut muscles loosening, tears dripped onto her cheeks.

"Jeez, Dolly! Don't start crying! I didn't want to make . . . I didn't mean . . ." Dolores didn't hear the rest of it. She ran up the steps and into the house, closing the door behind her and listening, as Ernie's footsteps scraped down the porch steps, crunched through the lawn, and finally melted into the ticking of the mantle clock. She stood there in the darkness for what seemed to be a long time, staring, as if hypnotized by the iambic passage of time. A beam of light from a passing car settled on the face of the clock. There were forty-five minutes before midnight.

Suddenly, she stiffened, sensing another's presence in the room. "Mother? Is that you?"

"Yes, dear." Her mother's voice sounded tired. She shouldn't have waited up. "Are you crying?"

"Frank must've told Ernie that . . . lie about Harry. Why does he have to go around telling that on the outside?"

"I don't know, dear. He never liked Harry."

"No, it's not only that, Mother. It's because he's mean. He's just like . . . just like Dad was!" Dolores flicked on the parlor lamp and looked across the room at her mother, who appeared much older than forty-four. A three-inch scar streaked her forehead, running upwards from the inside corner of her right eye to where her greyish hairline began. It stood out lividly: a bluish-white contrast to her pale pink flesh. The scar was extra thick, the stitches having broken a few days after it had happened. It sickened Dolores to look at it, and she turned away. "Frank shouldn't say things like that on the outside. It's all right in the house. We don't believe him, but when he . . . You don't believe him, do you, Mother?"

"It was so long ago, dear. Harry was . . . well, he was young and maybe just a little . . . wild."

"But, when word came of his death, you — everybody said what a fine boy he was."

"He died in the service of his country. We had to show our gratit . . . our respect."

"Show your respect!" Dolores faced the window. Outside, on the lawn, the pure white gloss of that afternoon's snowfall had transformed completely an ugly patch of shriveled grass into an unblemished carpet of down. "You had your chance to show your respect. You had your chance a long time ago. When he was home, you wouldn't allow him in the house."

"I was thinking of you, when I did that. The neighbors, they were talking, saying things."

"They're all hypocrites! They filled the church at his funeral." Harry's burial service was a little hazy, but Dolores could still recall how crowded it was, and how she had been permitted to sit in the first pew along with Mr. and Mrs. Critelli, and how, afterwards, they had left the church together while the rest of the townspeople waited in their pews.

"The whole town sympathized with Mr. and Mrs. Critelli, dear. After all, it was a funeral, and he was their only child."

"It's too late after a person dies, Mother. Why didn't you accept Harry when we wanted to become

engaged?"

"He wasn't working then. He didn't work right up to when he was drafted. Besides, you were only eighteen."

"You were only nineteen, when you got married."

"That was . . . uh, different." Her mother looked down at the floor. "Not only that, but I lived to regret it." On the mantelpiece, alongside the clock, was a headless statue of Venus that Frank had won many years before at a carnival. When the statue's head had been knocked off, Dolores had suggested to throw it out, but her mother would not allow it, saying that it was more proper for the Goddess of Love to be lacking a head.

"Well, Mother, if you regret your marriage, that's all the more reason why you shouldn't push me into dates now."

"But it isn't normal to sit at home and brood." Her mother didn't speak harshly; she seemed to be worried.

"You and Frank! Always playing Cupid! Like tonight with Ernie! Do you think I'm blind? Do you think I can't see what the two of you are doing?"

"You know, dear, you're almost twenty-five. All the girls in town your age are married. The few boys who are still single are moving to the city, with the mines closed and all."

"Maybe I'll move to the city, too." Dolores paused, awaiting her mother's reply. It did not come. "I've been thinking of getting a job and moving into an apartment in the city." The thought of moving to the city, where she wouldn't know anyone and where no one would know of her, was revolting. But she had often threatened it, having no intention of following through. She liked living in the small mining town. She liked the people, and they knew and respected her. Just that afternoon she had overheard Mrs. Lazor calling her a model for the younger girls of the town to follow. She glared a challenge at her mother. "Do you want me to move to the city?"

"There's a lot of bad people in the city. You'd be better off married and in a home of your own than in some big city apartment."

"I don't know why you want me to get married all of a sudden. This past year, that's all I've heard. Why? So my husband can come home and beat me? Like yours did?" Dolores caught her breath, sorry for having said what she said. But it was too late. Her mother's face became grim and she sat clumsily on the couch; the springs ground and scraped against the bare floor. The scar on her mother's face seemed to expand and expand, until Dolores could no longer see anything else but that swollen lump of discolored flesh. Her father had caused it. Drunk, he had grasped the chalk Venus and with the same rapier motion snapped the statue's head and ripped open her mother's forehead. It had happened a week before Harry was reported dead.

Her mother was silent for a moment, staring blankly. Then, she looked up at Dolores. "You mustn't judge all men by your father, dear. Just as you mustn't allow Harry's death to cast a shadow over your entire life."

"I don't intend to let it, Mother. It's just that . . . well, right now, I can't help comparing any boy I go out with to Harry."

"All right, dear, but just remember that anything I say to you I think is for your own good. I want you to be happy." The mantel clock struck the half hour, and her mother glanced over at it. "It's getting late now. You'd better go to bed. Work comes early."

Dolores went to her room. Once she had closed the door behind her, she felt much better, as if her room were a bastion which cares and troubles could not breach. She stood there, alone in the room for a moment, enjoying the cloister of darkness, then pressed the light button. Covered with a faded and blistered wallpaper, the four blue walls seemed to loom as silent protectors around her, and the room's low ceiling made the room seem more compact and secluded.

Her soothing fancy was shattered by a sharp rapping at her door. "Go away." Her words came automatically, almost without realization. Then, curiously, "Who is it?"

"Frank!"

Dolores opened the door. Her brother was neatly dressed, and he was big, as their father had been. But she was annoyed that anyone should bother her then. "Well, what is it? I want to get to bed! It's late!"

"I just saw Ernie down the road." He stepped past her into the room. "What did you do to him?"

"Nothing! I didn't do anything to . . . I told you I didn't want to go out with him!"

"You didn't want to go out with him! I had to talk to him for a week to take you out! How the hell do you think that makes me feel?" Frank sounded hurt, but he must've meant to be insulting.

"You did it on your own. I didn't ask you to." The pout in her voice was evident even to herself. "Did I ask you, Frank?" He didn't answer her, and she turned her back on him, looking towards a far corner of the room. There, a table was set unsteadily: its one leg shorter than the other two and its flimsy coat of veneer flaking. On the table was a picture of a soldier. A crucifix hung on the wall a little to the rear and just slightly above the picture, and, on each side of the picture, artificial yellow flowers were contained in dark green vases. There was a film of dust on the flowers and on the table. In front of the picture lay a fire-engine red scrapbook which covered half of the soldier's face.

"Don't be looking at that damn altar!" Frank's bitter tone sent a shock through Dolores. "That's the cause of all your trouble!"

"Don't you dare say that!" Her voice didn't have the same forceful impact that it had when she had spoken almost those very words to Ernie. In fact, this time, she sounded weak. "How can you say such a thing about a boy who - - "

"I'll say whatever I damn please about him!" Frank's fleshy face reddened. "He was no good. I knew him a lot better than you think you did!"

"Liar!" Dolores tried to match his tone, but she was frightened. When Frank was in this kind of mood, he reminded her of their father. "You're lying and you know you are! You want me to go out with your friends. Then, when I do and they don't like the way I am, you think you can come in here and shout and . . . and curse at me!"

"All right, Dolly." His voice softened. "Maybe you're right. I'm

sorry I shouted, but it's just that when I think how he - - Don't you see, Doll? I just want to help you."

"Everybody wants to help me. But does lying about Harry help me?" Dolores eyed her brother closely. He wasn't drunk, but he probably had been drinking. "I don't have to take this, you know. Your coming home half-drunk and shouting at me. Lying."

"Half-drunk!" Frank laughed, annoying Dolores all the more. "I had two beers over Helen's house. I couldn't refuse my future father-in-law, could I?"

"Well, maybe you're not drunk, then. But you're still lying about Harry. Just because I don't go out with those good-for-nothing friends of yours, it - - "

"Good-for-nothing? What was Harry? A canonized saint? Yeah, he was a real prize, he was. The rest of this town can make a martyr of him, but I was with him. I told you before. It was almost funny. Him fifty miles behind the lines on medical restriction, and he steps on a land mine. Why - - "

"Stop it! Stop it, Frank! You know I don't believe a word you say!" It had begun to rain. Dolores could hear a steady patter against the window. She walked over to the window. It was all blurry. "You just stop your lying!"

"You stop it! He told me there was nothing between you two. That talk about his wanting to be engaged to you. It was all talk. He was playing you along. He told me so himself."

"You can talk away, Frank, I don't have to listen." Dolores pressed her face against the window. She could hardly see out, as the patter against the pane grew louder. The rain was beating down heavily on the snow, and the snow was melting, and, already, patches of dead grass could be seen here and there on the lawn below.

"Dammit, Dolly." Frank twisted her around so that she faced him. "Do you think I like to holler at you like this? Didn't I wait almost two years before I even opened my mouth? Maybe I made a mistake. Maybe I should've written right away or told you as soon as I got home."

"But you didn't, and you know why you didn't! Because you couldn't. Because you're making it all up. You and Mother!"

"Honest to God, Dolly! He would've written himself. He promised me he would. I made him. But he got killed right after that. A day or two later. I guess he didn't get it off."

"Get out of here, Frank!" Dolores could hear the tremor in her voice, feel the trembling in her body. "Get out!"

"Aw, don't be that way." Frank laid his hands lightly on her shoulders. She backed away. "O.K., let's say it was a lie. All right? Even so, it's been over four years. You waited long enough. Longer than anyone would expect."

Dolores pointed her finger at the door. "Leave this minute, or I'll call Mother."

"All right, I'll go." But Frank didn't move toward the door. Instead, he took a few steps toward the table in the corner of the room. "But I'm doing you a favor first."

Dolores stepped between her brother and the table. "You stay away from that table!"

Frank glared at her momentarily, then, brushing her aside, he reached

for the picture of the soldier. "I'm taking this damn thing with me. Then, maybe you'll begin to act right again."

"No! No, don't touch that!" Dolores lunged at her brother and, in her haste, bumped against the table, tilting it. The vases, the scrapbook, and the picture slid along the table towards the floor. Whimpering softly, Dolores grabbed the scrapbook. The vases smashed on the floor. She drew back, clasping the book tightly against her breast and staring at the scattered flowers that lay amid the broken pieces of vase.

"Why the book, Dolly?" Frank's words thundered into her semi-trance like a raging torrent of strong acid, burning, burning into her brain. "Why the scrapbook and not the picture?"

Dolores looked down at the floor at the fallen picture without really seeing it, without really seeing anything. Then, the mist cleared. The picture was there on the floor, face down. She looked up, slowly, meeting her brother's eyes and raising the scrapbook higher, as if to cower behind it, as if it would hide what Frank already knew. She tried to speak but couldn't. She wanted to say that it had been a reflex action, nothing more. She had caught the scrapbook because it had been there in front of the picture, that was all.

"All right, Dolly." Frank walked to the door, pausing there. "I've tried long enough. Now you can hide if you want. Hide for the rest of your life behind that book. I give up on you." He left the room, shutting the door behind him. Dolores didn't even hear the slam.

Downstairs, the clock struck the quarter hour. Dolores listened to the dull bonging of the clock and, then, quite suddenly, thrust the scrapbook away from her. It landed on the floor, bursting open; an air-mail envelope dropped out. She picked it off the rug and withdrew the letter it contained, re-read it, and tore it into small pieces. Then, bending over, she picked up the picture. The glass had splintered, giving the photo an odd, distorted appearance. She put both the scrapbook and the picture back on the table, but it didn't look the same without the flowers and the vases.

Later, in bed, she heard the clock strike twelve. She pressed her head against the pillow, trying unsuccessfully to muffle the patter against the window; then, tossing restlessly, she tried to gather her thoughts, but they were too many, too confused, and it was late, and she was tired. In the morning, after a night's rest and with daylight in the room, she would be able to think clearly. She stretched out on her back, then relaxed and, drawing a woolen blanket more closely around her, lay still, awaiting sleep and listening, half-hearing, half-feeling the now steady beat-beat of her heart and, outside, the heavy downpour.

Brood at the End

● J. V. L. Crowley

I am past my season,
Like a fly, somehow lived to spring,
Turned on a brittle wing . . .
Or as a tree,
Hard in a desperate fall.

Thus snide catalysts unwind my day,
Precious causes to dismay,
For time occurs again
As if some dark intrusive sin,
Clouded in night by shadows deep,
Was kept, however starved by pain,
To fray my hard resolves,
Soon turned soft,
By resignation, lapse of strength,
Imagined not at all.

And so the synapse of my peace,
The castle built around,
And strong it was,
All tend to scatter clear or scald
The ferule of my years,
Now dull and copper green.

Though once a hawk to scatter,
And once a hound upon the trail,
Now there is no bright glint trace,
And it does not seem to matter.

So to resign, resign alone;
Now, what is now, for me to go;
How lapse the pulse or quick pursue,
What is pursued or lost
Into the strange abyss,
Which was, not as it seemed,
Bare and dark below the cliff.

I am past my season . . .
As a robin, culled by an artful progeny.
And I am cold, too cold
With but one thought:
Isolation is a virtue,
Holding the soul to ridicule,
And the mind to strange redress.

No Laughing Matter

● Raymond Roseliep

How odd that he should come for penance in
the striped Bermuda shorts. September had
been warm, and boys are boys no matter how
you find them; and perhaps the heat was get-
ting me, I wanted very much to laugh.

The best way to discard temptation (was
it Oscar's epigraph?) is to give in.
Yet I strove hard to choke my mirth. This is
no laughing matter, I repeated like
an antiphon.
The eighteen years looked solemn
on the prie-dieu in my parlor, but
suppose the kneeler, at his sudden move,
should pinch uncalloused knees?

I dare not grin.
Beside me bent a replica of Christ.
Though was I really willing to ignore
the buckle cap, now rolled between the legs?
God wore no cap — but then, His hair was long,
and with a butch He may have overtopped
convention.
Replica of Christ. And grow-
ing to the likeness more and more by aid
of my absolving hand.

I raised my arm
(and Holy Ghost forgive the smile, at my
expense): a decade of a poplin sleeve
ripped at the shoulder seam. I quite forgot
a mother's warning that her needlework
insured no seamless garment, and the oth-
er Christ would need repair.
Amen: the Ivy
league and ragged *alter Christus*, one.

Blanche DuBois & Emma Bovary

● C. N. Stavrou

If the spectacle of the outside world fails to have anything but a negative significance for us, then our inner minds which are filled through our senses with this outsideness either become negative also or we have to create a reality of inwardness to affirm our own existence in the face of the negation of the outer world.

(Stephen Spender, The Creative Element)

ARE *Madame Bovary* (1857) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) pleas against "man's inhumanity to man," or dry admonitions against the folly of

> *"Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam/Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn"?*

Critiques of Flaubert's novel (e.g., West & Stallman, *Reading Modern Fiction*) and Williams's drama (e.g., Joseph Wood Krutch, *Modernism in Modern Drama*) cautiously eschew a positive answer to this question. They seem inclined to support the interpretation that Flaubert and Williams are on the side of cynicism and realism. Despite the ambiguity in this respect, which they concede inheres in the French novel and the American play alike, they favor the view that both works castigate "romanticism" and "escapism." Such an interpretation, however, not only unaccountably ignores the avowed intentions of both artists, but gratuitously obfuscates the import of two works whose pretensions to greatness reside in simplicity and economy rather than in complexity and exhaustiveness.

The dichotomy between what-is and what-should-be, between the worlds of the down-to-earth Sancho Panza and the visionary Don Quixote, is a perennial motif in countless masterworks of literature. It is in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Keats's *Lamia*, Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*, Arnold's *Dover Beach*, Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, and Sartre's *The Flies*. Some argue that to live happily in fantasies (illusions, dreams) not recognized as such is better than to wake to the intolerable knowledge of Oedipus, Lear, or Captain Ahab. The boulevard of broken dreams, littered with Macbeth's tomorrows, may seldom, if ever, be banished by poppy or mandragora; in most cases, only the Eternal Footman's anodyne proves efficacious. Ibsen's Dr. Relling sums up this argument aptly: "Rob the average man of his life-illusion, and you rob him of his happiness at the same stroke." Who will deny that Shaw's belief in the infallibility of G.B.S. was prompted by this consideration? Others, however, are equally adamant in urging the unflinching facing-up-to-reality: Swift, Tennyson, and Arnold counsel us not to confuse

external reality with its representation (artistic or otherwise) when this representation is dictated solely by subjectivism. Pirandello repudiates both attitudes by disconcertingly asserting that the world of fancy cannot be distinguished from the world of reality, and that, consequently, the existence of objective truth is purely chimerical.

Flaubert and Williams, although cognizant of all the aforementioned modes of apperceiving reality, are partial to the first; they emphatically declare for the second of Spender's two alternatives. Their depiction of reality does not imply, let alone constitute, a negation of said reality in the manner of the cynic, the misanthrope, or the nihilist. At the same time, however, the unpleasantness, ugliness, and inhumanness portraved in their works suggest Hugo, Hawthorne, and Hemingway more readily than Zola, Melville, and Hardy. Significantly enough, Flaubert and Williams present the plight and fate of their heroines not as a product of Darwin and heredity or of Marx and society, but as the willful and self-willed product of human idealism. In this particular, they are as incorrigibly "romantic" as Jonathan Swift! And, although they would assuredly not subscribe to the strident verbal affirmation of a Shelley or a Faulkner, it is equally certain that they would find the Victorian "dynamism" of Tennyson's *Ulysses*, *The Lady of Shalott*, and *The Palace of Art* fatuously specious as an ethic to human happiness. For Flaubert and Williams deprecate in the very act of affirming the universality of the human phenomenon which is Miniver Cheevy. The empathy involved in the portraits of Emma and Blanche is Byronic in its transparency.

The "romanticism" in Flaubert and Williams is not there to serve as a scapegoat for naturalistic (amoral) determinism; it is intrinsic to the temperaments of both artists. Few, besides Baudelaire, have taken seriously or appreciated fully the exultantly-defiant profundity of "Madame Bovary, c'est moi!" That Flaubert intended his assertion to be taken in earnest is indicated by his exasperation when he wrote apropos of *Madame Bovary:* "On me croit épris du réel, tandis que je l'exècre, car c'est en haine du réalisme que j'ai entrepris ce roman." (*Correspondance*, III — Paris, 1892, — pp. 67-8) Blanche's exclamation in *Streetcar* is virtually a translation of Flaubert's French: "I don't want realism. I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth, I tell what *ought* to be the truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it." That Williams is speaking *in propria persona* here is amply attested by the similarity between this pronouncement and the opening monologue of Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*. In contrasting the affluent daydreams and subsequent dysphoria of their heroines, Flaubert and Williams leave room for pity and tears as well as ironic amusement and solecistic laughter. There is never any question, however, that, of all the characters in both works, only Emma and Blanche are endowed with a sensibility comparable to that of their creators.

Emma and Blanche reflect their authors' double perspective — the disturbing recognition that man's illusions incapacitate him for reality

which is unbearable to him without these illusions. Both women refuse to accept a normal life among people who appear to them insensitive, unperceptive, and unrefined. Each cherishes an ideal of gentility, a code of gallantry according to which she imagines her ancestors lived and loved but which, alas, is neither acknowledged nor understood by any of her contemporaries. Little wonder they find existence vapid if not sordid, and habitually revert in fancy to the proverbial past. Disillusioned in marriage (Emma marries an unimaginative, convention-ridden, dull, plodding, country-doctor, reluctantly pried away from his mother's apron-strings; Blanche marries an invert who, upon being discovered, and reproached by his wife, blows his brains out.) they rush impetuously into a series of unsatisfying liaisons. Invariably, their fitful snatches of amatory bliss are succeeded by periods of despondency. Repeated disappointments, however, serve only to impel them to more reckless escapades and, ultimately, to virtual nymphomania. For Eros — the negation of Thanatos, the final and absolute reality, from which they recoil in horror — becomes, as it always is in the characteristic Hemingway protagonist, an indispensable drug to them. Symbolism is employed in both works to underscore this: Flaubert personifies Death as a loathsome, disfigured, blind beggar; Williams personifies Death as an old, blind, Mexican woman vending funeral flowers. In both works, the imminence of the heroine's tragedy is betokened by the introduction of the character who personifies Death.

Unable to come to terms with the present, and neither able nor willing to abandon the substitute world of their inner lives, Emma and Blanche are rebuffed and mauled by the Anti-romantic. At its hands, their yearnings for love meet with ruthless exploitation, and their frivolous enthusiasms with malicious ridicule. The Anti-romantic in *Madame Bovary* is represented principally by Rodolphe, the cynical squire and coarse adulterer. His counterpart in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the gaudy seed-bearer, Kowalski. Rodolphe and Kowalski share many traits in common: a crassness born of insensitivity to human decencies; a hypocritical sense of propriety; an animal greed where women and money are concerned. Like Faulkner's Homer Barron *(A Rose For Emily)* and Popeye Vitelli *(Sanctuary* and *Requiem For A Nun)* they are irresponsible, vicious, and inhuman. They are representative of those Yahoos who make a habit of forgetting that the deliberate infliction of pain and humiliation is tantamount to barbarism. By his own admission, Williams has always spoken out against this form of barbarousness: "Every artist has a basic premise pervading his whole life, and that premise can provide the impulse to everything he creates. For me the dominating premise has been the need for understanding and tenderness and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstance." *(Life,* February 16, 1948.) Possibly this is not the prevading premise in Flaubert's life or work, but it is the underlying theme of a short story written after *Madame Bovary* and entitled *A Simple Heart.* Here Flaubert recounts the short and simple annal of an old servant-woman (strangely reminiscent of Emma despite the

difference in age) named Félicité, who diverts her affections and attention from people, who are more apt to wound than to comfort, to a parrot.

Emma and Blanche are consigned to defeat, but in their very defeat there is implicit an indictment, an indictment of the cruelty, greed, and boorishness in human beings. In Williams, this becomes patently clear by a reading (or viewing) of his other plays. It is less obvious in Flaubert because the chapters after the suicide of Emma are often read as if written by W. M. Thackeray pontificating on Becky Sharp. Perhaps Flaubert even invites such a reading. But, in any case, the important question requiring an answer is why Flaubert adopts the tone he does in the post-suicide chapters. Why does Flaubert's irony become mordant and lapse into vitriolic denunciation after the death of his heroine? Because the novelist is angry — angry at the stupid people who drove Emma to arsenic, and angry at Emma for allowing herself to be driven to desperation by such dolts and clods. As he deftly and vehemently excoriates Emma's mean, avaricious, craven contemporaries, Flaubert enables us to perceive that his heroine's folly, like Don Quixote's, partakes of the folly of him who loved not wisely, but too well.

The endings of *Madame Bovary* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* are depressing but neither defeatist nor pessimistic. Escapism receives a qualified rebuke. Nevertheless, Flaubert and Williams recognize, and sympathize with, the need of those whom the implacable fires of human desperation drive to suicide and insanity. The defeats of Emma and Blanche are not dictated by the jaundice or nihilism of their creators; Lear-like, both are wracked on the wheel of fire to demonstrate the thesis that the tragic gap between inner dream and external actuality can never be bridged so long as the human race is mired in paranoiac acquisitiveness and besotted with pharisaical morality.

A Shadow of Truth

● **Gordon Gilsdorf**

At noon today I see
  A patch of shade
  Like a watchdog
At the foot of every tree.

By sunset, each shadow's length
  Will strain the leash
  And test the chain,
To prove its master's strength.

Four A. M.

● **Stephen Morris**

The murderer and painter are awake
While the city sleeps.
Planning revenge or flight, through space they make
Criminal leaps;
And while one weeps
The other's brain runs blood, red flake by flake.

It is a suicide's hour to be alone
While all silence treads
A hob-nailed, thudding step in macrotone
And all hope beds.
Walled in, he weds
A lover with a heart of holystone.

Now are the dead more fortunate than he
Who sits through the night
Mapping a journey to identity.
The ink is bright,
One arm dead white,
More chalk than white both face and artery.

Don Luis The Fox

● **William C. Sayres**

"WHAT do you say, *Señor*? I do not hear you so well?" Don Luis peered up through the haze the *aguardiente* had brought. He wished he were not quite so drunk.

"I say you are a pig. A fat one. You are falling apart. I have no respect for you."

Don Luis sighed. He wondered who was saying these insulting things to him. "Why do you say these bad things to me, *Señor?*" He tried not to antagonize this fellow until he could find out how big he was.

"I say what I say because I am going to marry your daughter. I tell you I have no respect for you, and I will not have you in my home. You are always drunk. I only talk to you at all because your daughter wishes your blessing on our marriage. But I am a man. I say that your blessing be cursed. You will have no word in our marriage. You are dead to me."

Don Luis's face lit up. "Is it you, Pepi? It must be you, because you are to marry my daughter. But," and his sadness came back to him, "it cannot be you, Pepi, because you would not talk to me this way."

"No, it is not Pepi." The voice was deep, the speaking of a big man. "I am Serapio. You know of me."

Don Luis tried to remember. Serapio, Serapio, where did he hear that name before? Ah, but of course. Serapio. An ox. A new ox, only lately come to his *pueblo Moro*. Don Luis frowned. A bad ox was Serapio. *Moro* was better off without such an ox.

"You are an ox, Serapio. I know you. You stand there and talk this way because you are young and strong. If I were not old and drunk, I would not listen in peace to the words you say."

"Pfagh!" Serapio snorted. "You have no spirit left. You are only good to fight with the chickens."

Don Luis bowed his head. It was true. His spirit had washed away. A river of *guarapo* and *aguardiente* had gone through him and washed his spirit away.

"Go, Don Serapio," he said sadly. "I have no heart to talk with you."

"You have no heart," Serapio said contemptuously. "I leave you as I would leave a dead snake." And Don Luis knew that he was alone.

Don Luis held his head in his hands. If only the haze would clear. He must go find Pepi. Get up, Don Luis, get up, *caballero*. Go to find Pepi. *Carajo!* This *aguardiente* robbed a man of everything.

But soon Don Luis was on his feet, staggering to find Pepi. There were only three *tiendas* in Moro, three places where the fiery *aguardiente* was sold. Don Luis poked his head into one. No, Pepi was not here. It was not that Don Luis could actually *see* that Pepi was not here. But he would swear by it. Besides, if Pepi were here, he would

call out to Don Luis. So Don Luis must go on to the next *tienda*. He did so. Again his head poked through the door. Aha! Pepi was here. He knew it. There was something of Pepi in this place. And there was Pepi's voice, calling to him in welcome. "Don Luis, *amigo mio*, come over here and sit with poor Pepi."

Don Luis lurched over. His eyes were beginning to clear. It must have been the exercise of coming to this *tienda*. Pepi was drinking deeply from a pitcher of *guarapo*. Don Luis liked Pepi. Pepi was young and small and wiry and friendly.

"My good friend Pepi," said Don Luis, "why do you drink so heavily of the juice of the sugar cane?"

"Ah, Don Luis," Pepi sighed, "I drink because an ox is stealing your daughter from me."

Don Luis nodded sympathetically. "An ox," he agreed. "Come, let me take of the *guarapo*, too." The two men drank in silence. Don Luis was sweating freely from the drink and the heat of summer. He wished he were not so fat. Perhaps if he cut off his magnificent mustache he would be cooler . . . but no, a man must have his mustache when all else is gone.

"A bad thing has happened," Don Luis said with gravity. Pepi nodded and wiped his mouth with his sleeve.

"I do not yet understand this thing," Pepi said mournfully. "The ox Serapio came to me this morning. 'Luisa is mine,' he snort to me. He say, 'Pepi, I catch you near Luisa again and I break you in two.' To me he say these things, me who am your friend, Don Luis."

"A bad thing," Don Luis mumbled again.

"I am young," Pepi went on. "I do not wish to be broken into two parts."

"A bad thing."

"But my love for Luisa is great. And for her I would permit this breaking."

"And that is why you drink," Don Luis said wisely.

"I drink because I need the inspiration. I do not wish to be broken into two parts for nothing. I drink because the *guarapo* is full of fire and ideas. These are things that I need."

Don Luis gently eased the pitcher away from Pepi and took a deep draught. "You make a man thirsty, Pepi." Then he sighed in understanding. "Aha, my friend, Pepi, you are searching for a plan!"

"Yes, Don Luis, *amigo*, that is what I seek in the pitcher of *guarapo* which you fondle so lovingly."

Don Luis ceremoniously handed the pitcher back to Pepi. "My pitcher is very light after the care you have given it," Pepi said sadly.

Don Luis ordered another immediately.

"Now," Don Luis said, caressing the rim of the full pitcher, "let us find this plan."

"We must find the ideas that hide in the *guarapo*," Pepi said.

Don Luis felt a great confidence. He would not let his friend Pepi be betrayed by such an ox as Serapio. Besides, he must redeem his own honor. No man could stand for the insults of an ox. But the matter must be handled with wisdom. He and Pepi must give deep thought to the problem. It might be two, or three, or four, or even five pitchers before a suitable plan was worked out. Don Luis smacked his lips.

Twelve pitchers later, Don Luis tried to remember the plans that had come and gone. "Did we decide anything?", he asked Pepi doubtfully.

Pepi looked at his friend through red eyes to which the fog had long since come. "What is that you are saying, Don Luis?"

"Our plan, Pepi, my good friend. What of our plan?"

"Ah, yes." Pepi drank again of the muddy yellow *guarapo*. "I believe it will work, my father-to-be."

The confidence came back to Don Luis. "Of course, it will work," he insisted. He scratched his head. "But let us go over the details of this magnificent plan once more."

"At once." Pepi shook his head, trying to clear it. After a minute, he shook his head again. "A magnificent plan," he said.

Pepi and Don Luis looked at each other, as if waiting for something to break into the silence. Don Luis sighed.

"The trouble with this *guarapo*, Pepi, my friend and son-to-be, is its great wealth of ideas. So many come to the drinker that he is hard put to separate them all."

Ignacio, the proprietor, came over. "Gentlemen," he said in a bored voice, "I do not wish to fall in your estimation as a vulture always seeking meat, but your *centavos* for the last three pitchers are yet in your pocket and not mine."

Don Luis fumbled in his coat pockets. "Pepi," he said reflectively, "I have been in the *pueblos* and known many of these cracked pitchers. I have been in the cities where glasses accompany the pitchers. And I have been in the great centers where there are glasses and no pitchers. And I have yet to find a proprietor who differs in any way from the others."

Pepi nodded. "They listen to your troubles, but they do not hear."

Ignacio said in the same bored voice, "Gentlemen, I could not help hearing you when you shout like the hungry bears that live in the mountains."

"You must prove it, Don Ignacio, before we will believe you," Don Luis said expectantly.

"First, the fat one speaks. Then the young one speaks. Then the fat one, and then the young one. And soon you are pounding each other on the back and laughing. And then you fall into this drunken silence for three more pitchers."

"Aha!" Don Luis said triumphantly. "And why were we laughing?"

"There was something about a plan."

"Aha! And this is the most important question of all. What was the plan?" Don Luis felt crafty.

"You and Pepi know your own plan, surely."

"Yes, yes, Don Ignacio, of course. But we are testing if you have heard well and speak the truth when you say you are different from the other blocks of proprietors."

"Pepi was to challenge Serapio to a fight by the edge of the forest. Don Luis was to conceal himself in the trees and drop a small rock on Serapio's head at the opportune moment. Do I not speak correctly?"

"Of course, of course! You speak truly, my friend. Here are your *centavos*, Ignacio, my prince."

Don Luis finished the pitcher in a mighty gulp.

"And now," he said, pushing back his chair from the rickety

wooden table, "we go. We go, Pepi my boy. We go to clear up this matter." He gave Pepi an elaborate wink. "And you, my good friend, Don Ignacio," he said turning to where Ignacio had been standing a moment ago, "if the ox Serapio should appear tomorrow with a large lump on his head, I trust you will not be given to speculating out loud on its source."

Ignacio's voice came indifferently from the other side of the room. "It is well known that drunken men are given to wild fancies, and only a fool would repeat them to others."

Don Luis's eyes filled with tears. "It is good to receive the reassurance of noble proprietors," he said, "for such speculation might find ready ears, ears which would also listen to other speculations about the poisonous quality of your *guarapo*. It is well that there be no speculations at all." And he and Pepi staggered out into the night.

"I must find the ox," Pepi muttered with determination.

"I commend your spirit," Don Luis said. "But we must make certain that we will all meet in the near future at the same place. The forest is big, but there is only one ox whose head I wish to dent."

"You are truly a fox," Pepi said appreciatively. "Where would you suggest?"

"Let us make it in the clearing by the old still," Don Luis said meditatively. "I am always inspired by the sight of that fine machine."

Pepi laughed. "Truly a fox!" he said again with awe. "I go, then, to bring the ox for the slaughter. I trust that the rock will fall from the large tree next to the still."

"From that very tree," Don Luis agreed. "It is a tree which does not like oxen."

Pepi lurched off.

Don Luis made his way slowly to the clearing. Lucky I am, he thought to himself, that I have no wife to make bad noises in my ear this night. Not, he added from his conscience, that I did not love my dead Maria. But the ten years' practice I have had as a widower have brought peace to me along with the first loneliness.

Don Luis felt very melancholy now. Ah, he thought, that Luisa should be a bride now. Still, he had other daughters. Eight, to be exact. Let's see, now, Luisa would be the fourth married. That would leave Angela, Rosa, Clementina, Linda, and Eugenia. Don Luis scratched his stomach. It was true what they said about one's offspring: a man does not have sons by his size alone. Maria was small but, *Santos!* what a spirit! Her spirit had brought them nine daughters and Don Luis's size had brought no sons. But he loved his daughters. It was said everywhere in the valley that his daughters were as lovely as new rainbows. It was good to have beautiful daughters. In time it would mean many grandchildren. Right now it meant the friendship of every unmarried young man in *Moro*. It meant many pitchers of free *guarapo* bought for him by the suitors of his daughters. There was only one dissenter, the ox Serapio. And, thought Don Luis with deep satisfaction, soon the ox would have a buzzing head.

In a few minutes a feeling of deep warmth covered his heart. He knew why. It meant that he was drawing near to an old friend, the still. Many happy years it had served the thirsty men of *Moro*. Unfortunately in its

declining days it had begun producing home brew that tasted like a rusty boiler, which happened to be the original state of the still. And so it was abandoned, left in this green clearing as a monument to all good drinkers who remembered its better days.

It was dark now, and the Colombian moon shone amber. Don Luis hoped that Pepi would not be long. A man got sleepy looking at the moon. Don Luis decided to get closer to it by climbing the tree from which he would soon strike. But first he must have a stone of proper weight. *Carajo!* But there were no stones here! He must go down to the spring. It was not far, only whispering distance from the still. Don Luis stumbled down the slope. There it was. The water looked cool in the moonlight. Don Luis did not ordinarily have much use for water, but on this night the spring looked serene and inviting to him. He promised himself that he would drink some water soon, perhaps tomorrow. But now he must find his stone. Ah, here was a fellow! He picked it up. This was a stone that was made for the head of an ox! It was heavy, but the head of Serapio would be thick. He caressed his stone.

And now back to the clearing. Puff, puff, puff. Walking was no sport for a man. It was wearying, and not very exciting. But here we are. And there is our friend the tree. And you and I, my good fellow of a stone, have work to do!

Don Luis approached the tree. He leaned against it. Then he decided that he felt too comfortable and put the stone down and began to climb his tree. Two feet from the ground he remembered that he had not brought his stone along. *Carajo!* Down again with a small crash. Now for the stone. But where to put it? A man can not climb while he is holding onto a stone! Don Luis looked at his pockets. Not nearly big enough for such a rock, and besides they were filled with many holes. Don Luis sat down and tried to think. Was it possible to get both himself and this stone up the tree? Don Luis shook his head. "No," he muttered to the still, "it is not possible." Besides, he was feeling very sleepy. The juice of the sugar cane brought dreams to a man too soon! But he must not be found here. Someone seemed to be coming. It might be somebody he knew. Better to take his stone and move out of this clearing. He pulled himself slowly to his feet. He braced his back against the tree trunk and bent down and picked up his stone. He felt dizzy. "Come, my little stone," he murmured, "we must leave this place before it is too late." Too late for what? It was all too foggy to figure out. A little sleep and his head would clear. "Come, my little mountain," he said to his stone, "let us sleep for an hour or two." He staggered with his stone to the edge of the clearing. He lay down behind a big bush and went to sleep, clutching the stone fondly in his arms.

Then there was a crashing, and there were voices. Do not trouble yourself, he thought. A man with much drink in his head is safer asleep. All kinds of voices. He tried to separate them without opening his eyes. That was surely the voice of Pepi, he decided. And that bellow sounded like the noise Serapio the ox made. But there was

another, higher than the others. He opened one eye. There was his daughter Luisa standing over him, pecking at him with her voice.

"Huh?" he managed.

"Oh, my father, my father, what has happened to you, why do you lie so still and breathe so hard?"

He felt that he should explain. "Well, this stone that you see by my head . . ."

But he was interrupted. "Of course, of course. Oh, who would hit my poor father on the head with such a rock? At first I thought that you were only drunk, but now that I see this rock I see what a bad thing has been done. Was it Pepi?"

He felt that he should clear this up. "No, you see it was Serapio, and I . . ."

But again he was cut short. He did not have time to explain the plot against Serapio's head.

"It was Serapio, was it?" His daughter's eyes flared in the fading moonlight. "So that is why he is trying to kill dear Pepi, too! I see it so clearly now. I hear these noises as I go to find you; and I come to this place. There is Serapio trying to kill poor Pepi, and my father is stretched on the ground with a stone by his head. He is a vulture, that Serapio!"

"An ox," Don Luis added, glad that the matter seemed to be cleared up for her, since it saved him the effort of trying to solve the puzzle for her.

"Yes, an ox!" his daughter agreed, anger all about her. "And I will have nothing to do with such an ox!" She picked up the stone and carried it toward the struggling figures in the clearing.

"No, do not take the stone," Don Luis moaned after her. He wanted to embrace his stone again and go back to sleep.

"Do not concern yourself over Serapio," she called back. "The stone goes where it belongs!" Don Luis heard a faint but definite thud, and there were no more noises of struggling. Don Luis had a feeling that things had got away from him. He decided he would wake up long enough to get his stone anyway. He rubbed his cheeks and tried to put his feet under him.

When he got as far as the tree, he had an unaccountable impulse to climb it. He felt that there was some need of hurry, in the bargain. I will remember soon, he consoled himself, and I must not go climbing trees unless I have reasons. He lurched over to the still and draped himself around it. There was Pepi, and there was Luisa. And . . . oh yes . . . there was Serapio, dead to the world. Don Luis sighed. Some men had no business drinking so much *guarapo*, especially such an ox as Serapio. He heard his daughter and Pepi talking, as of people far, far away.

"You should not have done it," Pepi was saying. "I was only temporarily underneath. Soon I would have risen and quieted the ox."

"Oh, Pepi, my brave calf!" Luisa said, "I could not bear to see you being hurt."

"*Mi querida*," Pepi said softly. "I am glad that you have such a worry in your heart. But where is your father?"

"I left him on the grass where Serapio's stone put him," she said.

There was a long silence. Don Luis wondered that these two should be so happy together that they could not see him leaning on this beautiful still. He also won-

dered that Pepi should appear so puzzled. But then Pepi's face took on a great light, and his voice soon came gently to Don Luis through the richness of Luisa's moon-bathed hair:

"Your father, *mi adorado tormento*, is the very noblest of all foxes."

My Brother Figures in My Dreams

● **Raymond Roseliep**

My brother figures in my dreams, to thrive
on victories. He's less than 35.

Sheep left at 99, I sleep so sound
before he cries, "100, make it round!"

His scissors hold divides the strength of 10,
and with that sum he finds a way to win.

Or tackles, and ignores my added tall-
ness by 4 inches and ¼; I fall.

He wiggles in my hockey skates' size 12
until his 9 B stretch turns Disney elf.

On 3rd, he eyes my crafty pitch - - a hon!
but manages to score the blushing run.

Behind a pair of motorboats we free
our laughs to waves. But I subtract 1 ski.

We dance at prom with either golden twin:
he gets 2 blondes (what's mine is his): "Cut-in!"

Unmarried prof of junior math, I toss.
His 8 kids fight my thousand-eight. *His* loss.

The Creation of Light

Drawing in colored inks. Caedmon Ms. Junius XI. Bodleian Library

● **Sister M. Maura, S.S.N.D.**

God sits on the firmament arch
under his lesser arch of sky
above the world. Beneath His awful
and benignant word the Spirit
of God winged as a thin bush
and veiled from its own brightness
moves over deep water waves
the monk has margined into blue.

O bright the monastery bowl
of light the angel pours
from the higher arch above the world.
Sing, Caedmon, sing. No whales,
nor frost, nor sun, nor moon
nor heat to bless the Lord
with Sidrach-song.

Past God's big hand the light
falls down until the firmament
is wet with light and every
uncreated bird is wakened
to his heritage of dawns.

Indirect Elegy

Recollection of a reading given by Roy Campbell of his translations of John of the Cross.

● **Sister M. Maura, S.S.N.D.**

The Poet

No theory; only the experience:
leg bone in splinters
(gun fire in the last war)
forehead ringed with malaria sweat
(when elephants made metaphor)
face ruddy as a pub
(the farm in Portugal paid for)
eyes compassionate as a psalm
(the people I've met are good).

Read

In South Africa
the dialect never got farther than the throat,
and the Scotch-Irish burr
was packed in the hold of the emigrant boat;
and Provencal song had the flow
of nine century old wine.
But when he read John of the Cross
sound was a sacramental sign.

His Poems

The girl in the audience —
centrifugal in circles of April —
listened to no visible tide.
Love moved toward her
in opal, undiluted song.
Within my flowering breast
Which only for Himself entire I save
He sank into His rest
And all my gifts I gave.
She heard the song of John of the Cross,
and — golden water lilies blooming in her eyes —
she breathed a crystal breath
and turned toward love with no surprise.

Envoy

The girl in love.
The poem in art.
The poet in God. Alleluja.

The Sister

● **Charles B. Tinkham**

IT WAS a Friday summer evening. Heat still rose from the pavements of the city in broad, stifling waves, and in the hot stores along Grand Avenue blue, exhausted flies died as if willingly on the yellow tapes. Yes, it *had* been an unusually hot day, Miss Jean Meadows reflected, as she sat drinking coffee at a drugstore counter. Or perhaps it was the uncertainty or restlessness of the day that more disturbed her. Her office at the library had seemed so strange that afternoon, as if the exceptional heat were a warning, as if it had come to prepare her for a revelation of some kind. She had felt like a teen-ager waiting for a blind date.

Nor had she been able to escape the disturbing feeling that the afternoon had engendered. As she watched herself in the smooth darkness of her coffee, she felt it behooved her to do something this evening — something unusual, expensive, smelling like perfume, technicolored. She had thought of going to a movie after her supper at the Shining Bowl, but that would be no good. What she wanted to do most, she urged herself, was walk on the warm evening street under the little pale pricks of starlight in the sky. Or maybe sit in the park. Or perhaps fall in love (even this had occurred to her). But none of these thoughts quieted her. Nor did the coffee. It only drained blackly down inside her, making her hot, but, especially, alone. She guessed her heart was pounding in a frenzy, because the little blue vein on her right wrist was pulsing excitedly — symbol of her tenseness, of her hope, of her blind expectation.

Jean flicked at a fly on the counter, and as she watched it spin away in angry crippled little circles, she recalled that just a week ago her sister Angela had lain in bed all day, complaining of a headache, her forehead pale as bone. That evening, after work, she, Jean, had had to play nursemaid, running again and again from bathroom to bed and bathing her sister's forehead with ever so gentle strokes. And of course Angela had wanted hot lemonade too; and Jean, lifting her sister's head to the glass, had said, "There now, my little one, everything is going to be all right." Sick or not, sister was always wanting hot lemonade. Certainly it was puzzling to have to spend a Friday night in an old house on the edge of town, dousing your sister's forehead with cold water, soothing her throat with hot compresses, and reassuring her, as young as she was, that she would be "just grand" in the morning.

Miss Meadows, head librarian of City Library, a person much respected by civic groups, fidgeted on the drugstore stool like an adolescent trying to remember what time her parents expected her home. Because, as it happened, Jean had decided to stay in town tonight, sister or no sister. Angela wouldn't mind. Or

would she? . . . It was so seldom Jean went anywhere without first telling her sister that a strange feeling had already come over her. She felt weirdly alone, felt her muscles slowly tensing, as if now, on this strangest of nights, something mysterious, something exceptional was expected of her. She was exhorted to action by some remotely pulsating excitement.

Leaving a dime by the napkin box, Jean slipped from the stool and began walking toward the exit at the front of the store. For the first time, really, she was taking steps of her own. Before her lay the unexplored land of her own desire. The doorway now within arm's length opened onto a darkening summer street wrought with cries and subdued lights, with horns blaring and dim faces, with feet passing and whispered invitations. Jean stepped out to meet her adventure.

"Why, hello! We never expected to meet you here."

"Never," agreed another voice.

Jean came up with a surprised stagger against two women. Their eyes were wide and excited. Decked out in all their finery, they exhibited themselves like peacocks in the cruel glare of the store. Emma and Mary would certainly tell her where they were going, and, just as certainly, they would give her their approval of last Wednesday's meeting at the church.

"Well, of all the surprises," Jean managed in a slight voice.

"Come back in and have a limeade with us. We've wanted so much to talk to you about Reverend Malloy. Didn't he give a simply splendid talk Wednesday night? I thought your sister was deeply moved." It was Emma, who blurted this out, keeping the three of them standing long enough in the store entrance to elicit an extraordinary rebuke:

"Hey, lady, get clear of the road. You think this is a party or something?"

Jean was laughing to herself as they made their way to a booth, thinking that this surely must be the prelude to the unusual when some grimy-faced hulk of a man, possibly an ordinary laborer, dares to speak so fearlessly to one of Angela's best friends. But when Emma, florid and loquacious, had deposited herself on one side of the booth and Mary had crowded in next to Jean on the other, she found herself treacherously penned in, found the romance of the night shrinking in dismay from the presence of these two women.

"And do you remember the Reverend's saying how unfeeling some people are? They don't care at all about an orderly, kindly life lit by the sun of our faith in each other. I thought that a splendid point. I think the Reverend is so gifted. Don't you, Mary?"

"Yes, I was so — "

"I don't like Mrs. Gordon very much — do you know they've had to send her sister out to Riner Institution? — yes, for a fact — but she told me at church the other day that she thinks his Reverence is one of the most interesting men in this area — of the church, I mean."

Jean Meadows could hardly refrain from clapping her hands to her ears, but she had preserved enough presence of mind even on this strangely vibrating evening to think of her sister's feelings. The urge remained with her, however — real and just barely subdued. Mentally

she shut her ears to Emma's chatter and turned her attention to the waitress idling toward them. Why didn't the girl hurry? If she didn't take their orders soon, Jean would have to invent some inane excuse to leave. She felt Mary's body next to hers exhaling heat through the thin dress, squeezing her back, pressing her small into the hard corner of the booth. She imagined that in another minute her ribs would have no room to breathe and that she would die suddenly, upright, with a frozen look on her face in the hot summer bulb light. And the look would be so ludicrous that Angela's two friends would rock with laughter, in no time at all inciting everybody in the store to scream delight at the grotesque mask.

Suddenly Jean Meadows gave a start that made Mary look at her closely. And Emma, catching her friend's eye, gathered up the threads of her monologue and tied them finally and affectedly together. They waited for Jean to say something, but her face was turned away, in the direction of the indolent waitress.

Jean had all at once seen, where at first she had not seen, a small yellow flower tucked into the waitress's dark hair. It lay there peculiarly quiet, strangely detached from the whirl of thought it had instantly set off in the librarian's mind. It was a symbol, this flower, a symbol of the night's secrets, engaging, like a mysterious man, but at the same time frightening, speaking distasteful thoughts. Jean's mind became a sea of feelings hurtling in all directions, breaking into one another in hopeless confusion, and finally, as if afraid of betraying their real relationships, collapsing into a tense calm. Jean tapped her fingers nervously on the table top and, with no more warning, began pushing her way out of the booth.

"I've got to go. I'm sorry. I have an appointment."

"But won't you have a limeade? Here's the waitress now," Emma pleaded.

"No. Please! I've got to go. I'm sorry." Hurriedly Jean edged her way past Mary; and, walking rapidly to the front of the store, she abruptly became part of the secretive dark outside. It is possible that before she had taken many steps she heard Miss Emma Sayers begin:

"Did you ever hear . . ."

Out on the street, Jean Meadows breathed with deep relief. Free from those women, she was free to do what she would. She walked determinedly along the block, wondering at her own unusual resolution. She even permitted herself to look in through the small window of a tavern, permitted herself to wonder what was happening in there. But suddenly, as she resumed her walk, she felt queer. Her thoughts were racing and confused. She was trying to guess what would happen to her tonight, and at the same time, she discovered to her astonishment, she was trying to remember something, as if by looking into the past she could see the future. What could it mean? You don't *remember* what is *about* to happen. What was wrong with her tonight, that she was so desperately trying to know what would happen?

But the whole day had been out of kilter. That morning she hadn't been able to concentrate on her work, and she had avenged herself, childishly, by shouting at her assistant, Miss Neet, for a trivial over-

sight; and later, in the afternoon, she had again and again caught herself thinking of an episode in her youth that seemed to have little connection with her mood. She had recalled the day when she and Angela, under the little grape arbor in the back yard, had sworn to protect each other forever. Father had begun a nasty quarrel with mother and had ordered his two children outside. "Well, what are you two gaping at? This is no business of yours. Get out!" And the two girls had promised each other, in the shade of the arbor, never to let themselves be hurt by anybody's cruelty.

Jean walked on, very uneasy, trying to banish this memory from her mind. It seemed never to leave her alone, always to intrude on her real feelings. Again she embraced the night as the fulfillment of her desire, forgetting Angela, forgetting, or trying to forget, her own carrot-red hair, her own hesitation and shyness. Tonight would be her triumph at last, her reward, finally, for her long privation.

Suddenly Jean Meadows crossed Grand Avenue against the stop light and walked resolutely up to the ticket line in front of the Peerless Theater. Angela could say that movies were indecent, making a vulgar display of personal feelings, and "his Reverence" Malloy could call Hollywood, in his pompous way, the graveyard of virtue, but neither of them, nor both together, could prevent her from seeing a movie. They weren't Jean Meadows.

The head librarian of City Library was rather confused after she gave her ticket to the boy at the door. She saw such a riot of exit signs, such a bewildering rush of children between the resplendent candy and pop and ice cream machines, that she finally had to ask somebody for directions. Inside, in the auditorium, she stumbled about in the dark for three minutes waiting for her eyes to begin to see, but at last she found a seat near the front. At first the screen stretched up like a roaring, distorted giant, and everybody around her seemed to be talking.

"You stop pulling her hair. You hear me?"

"Sure he's going to marry her, honey."

"Well, sure. For goodness' sake. If you left the iron on . . ."

But gradually these voices faded; and the picture on the screen became distinct, became deeply touching, telling of love between a man and woman. This love overcame in its strength all obstacles, all difficulties, concluding in a long sweet embrace, the man holding the girl warmly in his arms. Jean Meadows did not hear the hisses, did not hear the catcalls; she felt only that she would like to be this girl, in the springtime of life, being held warm and close. To lose herself in the sure darkness of an embrace . . . Suddenly, as the music from the screen rose in a final crescendo, Jean remembered that it was her father who had taken her to her first movie. A shiver ran through her, a feeling of warmth that made her tremble.

Determined to see the beginning of the feature, Jean sat through the endless short subjects — a plea for clothes for Europe, a silly preview about rocket ships and men with glass cages on their heads, a vacuum cleaner ad, a cartoon for children. They were endless. She was marvel-

ing that finally, after all these years since the death of her parents, she had found the courage to go to a movie. In spite of Angela. And soon she would see again the man and woman holding each other, touching their lips together in love. But abruptly, unexpectedly, the screen flashed bright with a hospital ward. Young men were lying in row after row of beds; nurses were milling. A nurse was holding a glass of water to a young man's lips. A voice was saying: "We cannot forget those who fought and bled for us, died for us. These men are a reminder of the huge and sobering price we paid for victory. Their wounds are a part of everyone who enjoys the freedom for which they sacrificed themselves." Jean Meadows listened, obsessed. She leaned forward in her seat. And suddenly she remembered! Her sister. Angela. That morning — yes, that morning Angela had complained of not feeling well, of having a pain in her chest. Ignoring her, relieved to be able to escape at last from the tense and awkward breakfast in the kitchen, Jean had left the house as soon as possible. And now, unable to bear the thought of the morning any longer, she hurried out of the theater, her feelings in turmoil. Was this, then, what had made the day so unusual — this worry about her sister's health? This evening, then, would be as dull, as frustrated, as empty as all the other evenings in her life? No! No! No! This must not be Angela's evening. It would be the beginning of her, of Jean's, new life. What could prevent its being that? What could deny the feeling that ran deep inside her that this evening had been planned for her, her gratification planned as if beforehand? It was an overpowering sense by this time.

Suddenly, as arbitrarily and devilishly as she could, Jean Meadows decided to have a glass of wine. She continued down Grand Avenue till she came to the huge Power Company neon at Monroe and then started down the sloping street to the little valley of taverns in the distance. She seemed to be descending into a land of desire — a land of shadowed doorways and isolated intimate windows burning through a drapery of leaves. Her heart fluttered like a girl's.

A month ago she had had to make an emergency phone call from Charlie's Bar on Monroe Street — her bus had stalled one evening, and of course poor silly Angela would have worried if she hadn't phoned — and Jean had promised herself as she stood in the booth at the back of the mysterious, darkened room, that if ever she felt alone or angry, she would come here. In Charlie's Bar (yes, that was the name, she reassured herself as she quickened her steps) the evening would resolve itself: her hopes would be answered. The mystery of the evening would reveal itself in all its splendor, making of her life something warm and lovely.

She reached the little building in high spirits. It announced itself through the screen door with a rattle of talk, then a dark murmur, and finally a reckless burst of song, which, as Jean entered, became hopelessly distorted, collapsing at last amid a roar of laughter. Making out through the haze of smoke and beer that all the tables were taken, she stepped cautiously along the bar till she found an empty

stool. She was wondering whether to get up on it or not, whether to squeeze herself between the men on either side, when a voice somewhere behind her cajoled:

"Well, now. Look it here. Ain't she cute! Come on, reddie. Come on over here to daddy, honey biscuit. Awrrr!"

With frantic haste Jean hoisted herself onto the stool; and now, with her heart pounding wildly in her throat and stomach, she ordered a glass of sherry. She drank it with nervous, panting haste and bought another. She sipped more calmly now and, beginning to feel relaxed, was able to look around a little. Facing her was a mirror along the back of the bar and below it a broad shelf displaying long rows of bottles and a welter of knickknacks — including a green pitcher. It was a beautiful pitcher. It symbolized something. It was crude and yet real. It reminded Jean of a dream she had had, when she was younger. She ordered still another sherry now, continuing to stare at the pitcher, to stare at the glass nude reclining across its side, draped in the merest suggestion of clothing. The dream hadn't been anything indecent or bad. It had been reassuring, satisfying. During the next week at library school Jean had written a paper on reference work that was eventually printed in a national magazine. She wished she might spirit that pitcher away, like an elf, and live inside it forever. She wished —

"I say, could you hand me those matches over there?" The man to her left was speaking to her — a really very pleasant-looking man with a cigarette slanted from the corner of his mouth. A little frightened despite the bright warmth of the sherry inside her, Jean picked up the stray book of matches and handed it to him without a word. But she did not turn her eyes from him.

"Say," this as he fumbled to light a match, "haven't I seen you somewhere? Sure, I know. At the library. You work at the library. Say, you know, I'm coming to see you people pretty soon. There's a book I need . . . ah, here it is." The flame of his match sputtered up between them, showing the gentleness of his face. "Well, thanks," and he automatically handed her the matches as he turned to talk to a man who had just returned to the bar.

Jean motioned for still another sherry. A month ago she had drunk three glasses at a little party for the library staff at Miss Neet's apartment — they had told her sherry wouldn't hurt her — and now, by drinking a fourth glass, she would show her independence even of them. Of course she had never told Angela about those three drinks — that miserable little hypochondriac.

Jean Meadows tapped the gentle-faced man on the shoulder. "What book did you say you wanted?" Her courage amazed her.

The man turned. "Let's see . . . Oh, yes. I need a book that tells you how to refinish. You got one like that? You know: furniture and stuff. But it's not for me, it's for my sister. She buys all this junk at antique shops, desks and clocks and chairs — just drives her family crazy. All worm-eaten and awful-looking, you know. So now she has this idea of refinishing it, and I'm supposed to get her a book on how to make wormholes look like cigar-

ette burns from Emily Post's cigarette." He was almost out of breath. A smile twinkled at the corners of his eyes.

Jean kept a straight face. "Well, of all the coincidences. We've just received a book on flowers — well, what am I saying? — a book on refinishing old furniture, I mean, that's supposed to be the very best in the field. I could hold it for you if you like — if you'd let me have your name."

"Arthur A. Abner is the name. Really. If you'll pardon the expression. Don't laugh. I'm proud of it. And the middle one's Alexander. How's that for a name? Arthur Alexander Abner. In school my teacher always used to call on me first, and I was never ready of course, and now all my friends call me the Automobile Association of America." Jean smiled now; perhaps her friends at the library had never seen her face glow with such a smile. Suddenly she felt his hand over hers. A peculiar shivery vibration ran through her body; her heart thudded in her chest, echoing tightly in her throat. The evening had come to her and given itself up to her. But she had the oddest feeling: she wanted to pull her hand away. In fact, it was beginning to draw toward her body despite her strongest efforts. She looked again at the pitcher, seeing suddenly, for the first time, with a start of terror, a very innocent, a very trivial thing. The nude was holding a flower in one of her hands — simply a flower, of no particular kind, but white, like *Angela's forehead.* The flower — Angela's forehead! The two seemed hopelessly confused. Angela was sick . . . must get home at once . . . the pain this morning . . . maybe dying. Messages of this kind had come to people before. But no! Angela was pretending! She was trying to trick her again. This hand, the man's, was warm and safe. This was her evening. The evening had come to her and would close her now in its arms . . .

Jean Meadows tore her hand away, slid off the stool, and hurried out of Charlie's Bar like the guilty prey of a frighteningly unknown enemy. She flagged down a bus at the corner (luckily it was right on time) and sat with a hollow, big feeling in her stomach as the bus jolted toward the outskirts of the city. She was trying not to think, trying to drive away the hungry thoughts of her mind. The moon twisted like an evil mouth in the bus glass window. She was trying to remember and not remember something.

The walk up Ash Street was still and very lonely. Jean felt the muscles of her arms and legs tensing as they had in the long ago before an examination. She was frightened. Suddenly she pulled herself up, her arms falling cold and heavy to her sides. Without quite believing it, she was standing in front of her own house, staring dazedly along the path to the wide front porch. The light by the door was not burning. It was out, like a night-clenched blossom. Jean Meadows had all but walked by her own house because for the first time in years Angela had not left the porch light burning. What did it mean? Fear welled in Jean's heart, her eyes hypnotized on a dark upper window of the house, her body thrashed into action. Angela *was* sick! She had been too weak to reach the porchlight! She was

deathly ill! Wildly Jean ran up the path; her breath, a pain. A metal post whipped sharply against her leg, throwing her to her knees. Behind the wire of the low fence, a poppy nodded subtly in the night air. Jean felt for the wound; and as her fingertips drifted carefully over the silk of her stocking, as her eyes prodded into the center of the poppy, she remembered. She remembered what she had been trying to remember all evening. There was no wildness now. Thoughts came incisively, cogently. Her mind became a vessel of calm, impartial thought. The cut burned in her leg.

This was it: Angela had always been fond of flowers. These were her poppies in fact. As a result — this didn't seem at all strange — somebody had thought to invite her to the flower show at the Auditorium tonight. Somebody had taken her to the Annual City Flower Exhibition tonight, and so of course she wasn't at home. It was simple. Last Sunday, at breakfast, Angela herself had said she'd be gone tonight. In fact, the two sisters had quarreled about it. And that was all there was to it. Jean had simply forgotten about the flower show.

Jean Meadows read her watch by the light of the little flashlight she carried in her purse. It was only nine-thirty. For some reason it seemed later. She walked as best she could around to the back yard, where she sat on the little bench in the grape arbor. As she listened to the stillness around her, she knew she could easily have been crying. But the hurt rose from her leg and, covering other pain, filled her with immense and steadying calm.

Nuns in the Windy Morning

● **John Fandel**

Black dimensions of wind,
The peek-a-boo nuns
Scurry like birds
In twos of a kind
Of different ones,
Like whispers of words.

The shadow they share
Darkens and wanes
As they glide, silhouettes
Of silence who wear
Rosaries, quick refrains
Like thin castanets.

On the Way Back from Washington

• Joseph Reino

Mile on mile consumes
the same gray earth
farm factory or fame.
Here there a mystery
or a starved stretch of God.

The blind can catalogue
these sounds
these hardened waves
these seas, rigid as death
December-cold as trees
- - all this ground of being.
We their seeing guides
their argus-pretenders
see them only . . . .

A train roars
THE BLAST BLINDS
tears out the eyes
of swift hills in a frame.
I think of an eternal Grünewald
upon a wall
and the wound of time
upon my wrist.

Contributors

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